

VZCZCXRO9885
RR RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHHM
DE RUEHDT #0089/01 0800312

ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 200312Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY DILI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3938
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHMFIU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1047
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 3367

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000089

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STATE FOR G/TIP AND EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SMIG](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [TT](#)

SUBJECT: TIMOR-LESTE LAUNCHES ANTI-TRAFFICKING TRAINING

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Summary

[¶1.](#) On March 13 - 14, two major NGOS in Timor-Leste held an anti-trafficking workshop, "Halt Exploitation, Learn to Prosecute (HELP)", for over 68 members of government agencies and NGOs. The GOTL signaled its strong support by having Foreign Minister Da Costa serve as the keynote speaker in the opening panel. The Department of State has invested over \$360,000 in HELP grants to International Organization on Migration (IOM) and the Alola Foundation in Timor-Leste since FY 2006 to provide training to raise awareness and strengthen mechanisms against human trafficking within the police, border police unit, justice, and civil sectors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is coordinating GOTL implementation of this program, and after a hiatus resulting from the 2006 political crisis, last August resumed meetings of its Human Trafficking Task Force, with participation by other government agencies, NGOs, international organizations, and civic groups. The task force held its second meeting on February 21, 2008.

Foreign Minister, DCM Open Workshop

[¶2.](#) On March 13, DCM joined Timor-Leste's Minister of Foreign Affairs Zacarias da Costa in delivering remarks at the opening ceremony in Dili for the "HELP" anti-trafficking workshop. Also featured were International Organization for Migration (IOM) chief Luis Vieira and Alola Foundation chief executive officer Anne Finch. Foreign Minister Zacarias Da Costa said while the trafficking problem in Timor-Leste did not appear to be extensive, the GOTL was committed to nipping it in the bud. Otherwise, he said, the experience of other Southeast Asian countries showed that the trafficking problem has the potential to overwhelm the GOTL's capacity to deal with it. Da Costa said that the GOTL views border security as crucial in this regard, and outlined efforts by the military and police to make improvements. He reaffirmed the commitment of the GOTL to strengthening inter-agency cooperation and reaching out to international partners.

[¶3.](#) DCM commended the increased attention that the international community had devoted to the trafficking problem in recent years. He outlined the USG's approach, saying that that last year the USG spent approximately \$74 million to fund 154 projects in about 70 countries to support foreign government and NGO efforts to combat human trafficking. He added that since FY 2001 the USG has funded more than \$448 million for anti-TIP

projects outside of the U.S. He emphasized that the USG seeks not so much to pillory foreign governments on this issue as to facilitate international cooperation. Highlighting that the USG also is committed to combating human trafficking within the U.S. borders, he noted that 10 federal agencies are involved in anti-trafficking efforts.

Much Ground Covered

¶4. The workshop agenda provided participants with a comprehensive introduction to human trafficking issues in the country and the region, and specialized training on effective response. It also facilitated networking between concerned stakeholders, and provided an open forum for discussion on priority responses. The seminar resulted in participants charting an initial mapping of available victim support services and preliminary agreements on the institutional frameworks required to effectively combat human trafficking. IOM and the Alola Foundation pledged to launch a new public information campaign funded by the Department for specialized training of Timorese journalists, foreign embassies, and members from the law enforcement sector.

¶5. On the first day of the workshop, presenters covered basic concepts and terminology; group work on applying human trafficking concepts and terminologies; overview of human trafficking in Timor-Leste and Southeast Asia; discussion on local knowledge of human trafficking in Timor-Leste; national and international legal frameworks; reporting; and information and investigation for cooperating with law enforcement agencies.

¶6. On the second day, participants addressed coordination and cooperation; data collection and research; awareness creation; discussions and recommendations for preventing human trafficking in Timor-Leste; identification and referral of victims; role plays on interviewing techniques; networking and referrals in Timor-Leste; criminal process in Timor-Leste; human trafficking

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as a human rights violation; round table discussion on developing institutional structures to support counter trafficking efforts in Timor-Leste; human trafficking awareness assessment; and closing remarks and presentation of certificates by MOFA Secretary General.

GOTL Focused on TIP

¶7. The Timor-Leste Cabinet formed in August 2007 has taken concrete steps to fight human trafficking, despite scant resources and the pressure of other security priorities. The presence of Foreign Minister Zacarias da Costa at the opening ceremony for this two day conference received media coverage and sent a strong signal that this is an issue of priority for the government. Moreover, the workshop included training of law enforcement officers on victim identification and protection. This agenda highlights the government's commitment to improve coordination among its agencies and to train their personnel on fighting human trafficking.

¶8. The GOTL will work with IOM and the Alola Foundation in sponsoring another "HELP" anti-TIP workshop for journalists and foreign embassies next month, in addition to a quarterly stakeholders and networking group conference each quarter. While modest, these steps indicate a growing commitment by the government to overcome its limited resources and reliance on international organizations and NGO's to increase awareness. More significantly, it highlights its commitment to train law enforcement and security personnel on identifying and combating human trafficking, and sustain a momentum on increased efforts.

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